

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 7607

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SUBJ: THE ZUNO FAMILY

1. THE RECENT KIDNAPPING OF JOSE GUADALUPE ZUNO HERNANDEZ, FATHER-IN-LAW OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND PATRIARCH OF THE ZUNO CLAN, HAS FOCUSED ATTENTION (PROBABLY UNWELCOME) ON THIS FAMILY, WHICH IS REMINISCENT (THOUGH LACKING THE REDEEMING FEATURES) OF THE BORGAS AND THE JAMES BROTHERS. THE "OPERATIVE" GENERATION, SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE KIDNAP VICTIM, NUMBERS TWELVE, INCLUDING MARIA ESTER ZUNO, WIFE OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE VICTIM REMAINS ACTIVE IN MANY FIELDS DESPITE HIS 83 YEARS. FOUNDER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GUADALAJARA, HE HAS FOR DECADES BEEN INVOLVED IN UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS (INCLUDING ITS VIOLENT POLITICS). HE IS REPORTEDLY THE AUTHOR OF SOME 70 BOOKS, AND WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED A COMMISSIONER IN THE FEDERAL ELECTRICITY BOARD. HE EXEMPLIFIES ONE OF THE MOST STRIKING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY HE HEADS, IN HIS RATHER IDEALISTIC STRIVING TOWARD INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT AND CULTURE WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY EXERCISING POLITICAL POWER AS RUTHLESSLY AS ANY OTHER PROVINCIAL CACIQUE.

2. THE FAMILY, ALWAYS UP TO ITS ELBOWS IN POLITICS, HAS FOR DECADES BEEN A POWER AND A LAW UNTO ITSELF IN JALISCO STATE, BUT ONLY WITH THE ACCESSION OF AN IN-LAW TO THE PRESIDENCY HAS IT BECOME A TRULY NATIONAL PROBLEM. THE KIDNAP VICTIM

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WAS ONCE GOVERNOR OF JALISCO (1923-28) AND SERVED (IF THAT

IS THE RIGHT TERM) AS FEDERAL DEPUTY (1920-22). AS FAMILY AFFAIRS HAVE PROSPERED, FOUR OF HIS SONS HAVE COME TO HOLD FEDERAL OR STATE OFFICE, TWO MORE ARE INVOLVED IN STATE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, AND A VERY ACTIVE AND INFLUENTIAL DAUGHTER IS MARRIED TO THE PRESIDENT. POLITICALLY, THE FAMILY LEANS FAR TO THE LEFT. THE MATRIARCH, CARMEN ARCE DE ZUNO, APPARENTLY INSPIRED HER CHILDRENS' KEEN IDEOLOGICAL STRIVING TOWARD THE LEFT WITHOUT INHIBITING THEIR POSSESSIVE INSTINCTS. SEVERAL OF HER SONS HAVE BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH THE POPULAR SOCIALIST PARTY (PPS, MARXIST). MRS. ECHEVERRIA ALSO SEEMS DRAWN IN THE SAME IDEOLOGICAL DIRECTION AND, IT IS SAID, DEMONSTRATES SPECIAL ATTRACTION TOWARD THE CHINESE AND CUBANS. A BROTHER (HECTOR ZUNO) HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE MEXICAN-RUSSIAN CULTURAL EXCHANGE INSTITUTE. (HIS FATHER WAS ONCE PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE.)

3. THE ZUNOS ARE SPECTACULAR TROUBLEMAKERS. ONE BROTHER OF MRS. ECHEVERRIA, JOSE GUADALUPE ZUNO ARCE, SERVED A PRISON TERM (1959) FOR "SEDITION AND SOCIAL DISSOLUTION". THE BABY OF THE FAMILY (ANDRES ZUNO) IN 1970 LED A FRACAS AT THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF GUADALAJARA WHICH RESULTED IN FIVE DEAD AND TWELVE WOUNDED. HE ESCAPED ARREST BY FLEEING TO MEXICO CITY WHERE HE TOOK REFUGE UNDER THE PROTECTIVE WING OF HIS SISTER, WIFE OF THE PRESIDENT-ELECT.

4. THE ZUNOS HAVE BEEN CREDIBLY LINKED TO ALMOST EVERY CONCEIVABLE CRIME FROM MURDER TO DRUG TRAFFICKING. THEIR RUTHLESSNESS AND POWER ARE WIDELY KNOWN AND FEARED BUT PARTICULARLY IN JALISCO STATE. THEIR TRUE STANDING AT HOME IS PROBABLY BEST ILLUSTRATED BY SOME UNATTRIBUTED RECENT COMMENTS HEARD IN GUADALAJARA. A PEASANT "PARTICIPATING" IN A POPULAR RALLY FOR THE KIDNAP VICTIM SAID IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHY HE WAS IN GUADALAJARA, THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ATTEND AND TRUCKED INTO TOWN. A REPORTED NOT UNCOMMON SENTIMENT OF GUADALAJARA NATIVES WHEN THEY LEARNED OF THE KIDNAPPING WAS: "QUE BUENO*" (GOOD*)

5. ALMOST UNTOUCHABLE POLITICALLY, BACKED BY ENORMOUS
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(AND, ACCORDING TO POPULAR BELIEF, ILL-GOTTEN) WEALTH, NOT WITHOUT INTELLECTUAL ASSETS AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, THE ZUNO FAMILY, TAKEN AS A WHOLE IS A FASCINATING CASE STUDY. IN MANY WAYS THE FAMILY IS A THROWBACK TO AN EARLIER ERA. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS SOMETHING MORE THAN A SOCIOLOGICAL PHENOMENON, STANDING AS IT DOES CLOSE TO THE SEAT OF POWER.

6. THE EMBASSY WILL FORWARD SOON A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY IN
GREATER DEPTH OF THE ZUNO FAMILY.
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